

# **Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Management Plan**

## **Restoration Plan Database: Crystal Reports of Individual Plan Summaries**

### **I. BASIC PLAN DATA**

#### **Plan name:**

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Management Plan

#### **Brief description of plan:**

The Rookery Bay NERR, located near Naples on the southwest Gulf coast of Florida, provides a basis for informed coastal decisions by communities in Southwest Florida, through an integrated program of coastal stewardship, research and education. FDEP manages 110,000 acres of nearly pristine mangrove forested wetlands, barrier islands, inshore waters, and adjacent uplands that include the pristine Cape Romano and Ten Thousand Islands. This estuarine ecosystem includes 12 important habitats, used by over 150 species of birds, 200 species of fishes, and endangered wildlife such as the West Indian manatee, loggerhead sea turtles and least terns. Important cultural resources (e.g. indian middens) are also documented. The management plan for RBNERR is a forward-looking document that describes a course of action for managing the Reserve from 2000 through 2005. This plan defines attainable goals and objectives, identifies significant resource issues, and describes the priority programs and strategies necessary to support the Reserve's mission. In 2005, the plan will be reviewed and updated.

#### **Region the plan is located within:**

Gulf of Mexico Region

#### **Watershed(s) included within the plan:**

G040x

#### **Area plan covers (in square miles):**

2,025.00 square miles

#### **Plan scale:**

County

#### **Plan's lead organization(s):**

National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration, Florida Department of Environmental Protection

**Plan's Main Contact Information:**

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**On-line version of plan:**

**Date of original plan:**

8/2000

**II. TECHNICAL INFORMATION**

**Plan includes restoration goals:** Y

**Level of detail of the goals:**

G

**Summary of the goals:**

Goal I: Resource Management and Protection:

I-A. Restore natural freshwater inflow quality, timing and quantity to the fullest extent possible, by promoting conservation of natural flowways through cooperative efforts with federal, state and local agencies, organizations and private landowners. I-B. Protect and restore natural ecological functions and cultural sites within RBNERR through invasive species control, prescribed burn management, and restoration of wetlands and hydro patterns. I-C. Assist in recovery of endangered species through cooperative efforts with federal, state and local agencies and private organizations. I-D. Promote compatible public use of RBNERR resources while minimizing natural and cultural resource and human use conflicts through proactive identification of sensitive habitats and cultural resources relative to public use patterns. I-E. Incorporate state-owned uplands and submerged lands representing the Rookery Bay and Ten Thousand Islands estuarine ecosystem into an expanded NERR boundary. I-F. Establish adequate long-term control of key land and water resources and essential buffer areas necessary for the protection of RBNERR resources, and thus ensure a stable environment for research and education.

**Plan recommends or uses criteria for selecting restoration sites (e.g. cost benefit ratio, ecological benefits):**

Y

**Summary of the criteria:**

Plan does not identify criteria but uses them under the Resource Management and Protection Plan. Essential habitats within the RBNERR are and will be identified with enhancements through the application of GIS and associated technology. Results have directed management decisions for restoration, prescribed burns, stewardship and land acquisition projects.

**Plan recommends restoration of specific project sites:**

Y

**Plan includes a discussion of funding sources:**

Y

**Plan addresses long-term protection of restored sites:**

Y

**Partners included in developing the plan:**

Federal  
State  
Local  
Non-profit Organizations  
Academia  
Foundations  
Private landowners

**Type(s) of public outreach included during plan development:**

Held public workshops, meetings, open house, or scoping meetings  
Formed an advisory group(s)  
Was subject to a public comment period

**Plan includes public outreach as part of plan implementation (e.g. annual public meeting, local group participation):**

Y

**Plan discusses the application of innovative approaches to restoration:**

N

**Plan make use of GIS mapping capabilities:**

Y

**Plan addresses monitoring/reference sites for ecosystem level monitoring (baseline conditions) by:**

G

**Plan addresses monitoring/reference sites for project level monitoring by:**

G

**The plan discusses or coordinates with other restoration plans covering the same geographic area:**

N

**Other plan names:**

**Plan contains detailed information on historic and/or current habitat size, rate of loss, acres restored or protected, etc.):**

Y

**Summary of this habitat information:**

The Rookery Bay and the Ten Thousand Islands ecosystem is a prime example of a nearly pristine subtropical mangrove forested estuary. The RBNERR is located in the West Florida Subregion of the West Biogeographic Region. The total estimated surface area open waters encompassed within proposed boundaries are 70,000 acres or approx. 64% of the RBNERR. Most habitat loss is due to invasive plant and animal species competing with natives. Recent studies have confirmed that the estuary was used by pre-Calusa Indians and pioneer settlers. Midden sites are scattered throughout mangrove basin forests and barrier islands. Early pioneers settled in the vicinity of Shell Island Road and Henderson Creek, first establishing small farms and later dredging shell from several large mounds to provide fill for local roads and construction. Efforts to preserve Rookery Bay estuary were initiated in 1964, when developmental pressures were directed toward this relatively undisturbed estuary. From 1964 through 1974, over 3,700 acres of lands associated with the Bay were acquired primarily through the efforts of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, the National Audubon Society, and The Nature Conservancy.